

LANL protects milkweed to preserve monarchs

October 27, 2019

[LANL protects milkweed to preserve monarchs](#)

by Jenna Stanek

If you grew up in New Mexico, you probably remember a time when lots of monarch butterflies wafted through the air in late summer and early fall. These days, they're a relatively rare sight. Sadly, monarch butterfly populations are under severe stress. They have declined by 85 percent in the past two decades, prompting the monarch to be considered for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

In Mexican lore, the monarch butterfly holds a mystical power. They were considered the embodiment of heroes and the newly departed dead. The Teotihuacan culture venerated the butterfly in frescos and on palace walls, and Toltec warriors emblazoned them on their breastplates.

As part of Los Alamos National Laboratory's environmental stewardship efforts, a Los Alamos team has been documenting the cycles and seasons of monarch butterflies, and the location of milkweed on Laboratory property. These efforts will better inform management decisions if this species is listed under the Endangered Species Act. They were able to document eggs on milkweed in late June and caterpillars enjoying milkweed into September.

This story first appeared in [Albuquerque Journal](#).

Managed by Triad National Security, LLC for the U.S Department of Energy's NNSA